

**The Foreign Secretary of Pakistan
H.E. Mr Riaz H. Khokhar**

**Address to the Geneva Forum
May 22, 2003**

Mr. Keith Krause,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me begin by thanking the Geneva Forum for providing me this opportunity, in an informal setting, to engage in a candid discussion on Pakistan's foreign policy.

I have been informed of this Forum's active interest in promoting disarmament and international peace and security. As I said in my statement before the Conference on Disarmament earlier today, Pakistan is fully committed to these objectives.

I also greatly appreciate and thank you all for your presence here. I look forward to an interesting and spirited interaction following these short remarks.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Pakistan, the culmination of a dream of the millions of Muslims of the sub-continent, emerged on the world scene on 14 August 1947. Since then, Pakistan has pursued a foreign policy based on the principles of peace, justice and equity, as enshrined in the United Nations Charter. Cradled between powerful forces and expanding empires strict adherence to international legality has been the cornerstone of our interstate relations.

During the Cold War, and given our hostile geo-political environment, our security had been our foremost priority. Thus, a fledgling nation had to join military pacts and spend huge resources on its defense, obviously at the expense of its socio-economic development.

In 1974, India conducted its first nuclear test. And in 1979, the then Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. Both these events had far-reaching implications for Pakistan.

For years, more than 3 million Afghans were provided refuge on our soil, adding to our economic burden. We still host more than a million Afghan refugees and hope that as the situation in Afghanistan improves they would return to their homeland.

Following the nuclear test by India in 1974, Pakistan had proposed a number of steps providing for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South Asia. These included simultaneous adherence to the NPT as non-nuclear weapon states, acceptance by both countries of full-scope IAEA safeguards, a regional test ban treaty and mutual inspection of each other's

nuclear installations. These initiatives were actuated by the desire to banish the spectre of nuclear weapons from a deeply troubled region, riven by conflict and depressed by poverty. Unfortunately, none of these proposals elicited a favourable response.

The abrupt end of the Cold War had left the world searching for a new paradigm. We heard prognostications signaling the “end of history” and the impending clash of civilizations.

In my view, history will end only with the closure of our civilization. As long as the human race inhabits this planet, the quest for pre-eminence will continue to generate the ebb and flow of history hopefully in concord but also in conflict. The Emperors of Rome, at the height of their imperial power must have been tempted to pass a similar verdict, only to be reprimanded by the subsequent currents of history.

The thesis of the clash of civilizations is also flawed on many counts. The world is fast becoming a melting-pot, allowing distinct cultures and civilizations to live side by side ideally in conditions of peace and harmony.

We are living in an interdependent world, rather in a world of compartmentalized, monolithic civilizations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The post-Cold War period, the decade of the 1990s, could be defined as a period riven with crises.

In our region, the situation in Afghanistan became more complex leading to the emergence of the Taliban regime. The Kashmiris intensified their struggle for self-determination. And in May 1998, South Asia became nuclearized following the nuclear tests first by India and, then, by Pakistan.

Meanwhile, terrorism reared its ugly head across the globe. The travesty of September 11 galvanized the international community to rise to the challenge effectively.

Itself a victim of terrorism, Pakistan immediately joined hands with the international coalition against terrorism. As a frontline state, we played a pivotal role against Al-Qaeda, which continues to this day. Our positive and effective efforts to destroy Al-Qaeda are widely acknowledged and appreciated. There would be no laxity in our resolve until our shared objectives are fully achieved and the scourge of terrorism is completely eradicated. To win this difficult battle the symptoms as well as the causes would need to be addressed. To ignore the latter would be short sighted if not counter-productive.

Narcotics trafficking and its links to transnational organized crime is a matter of concern to the international community. Pakistan is committed to playing its role in countering this evil. We have achieved impressive results. Our exertions against these abominable activities would continue.

The reconstruction of Afghanistan is critical to the advancement of peace in our region. Pakistan is extending every possible support to the government of President Hamid Karzai. The deployment of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) beyond Kabul would greatly facilitate the objectives of reconstruction and internal security which are necessary for Afghanistan's economic and social revival.

A friendly, peaceful and prosperous Afghanistan is vital for our security. We are therefore determined to optimise the opportunities offered by the Bonn Agreement.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The preemptive military strikes against Iraq have added a serious dimension to the evolving international situation. Without going into the merits or otherwise of that action, it must be underlined that the use of force without the authorization of the United Nations would severally test the authenticity of the structure of international norms that was so painstakingly constructed from the ashes of the 2nd World War. The principles of the Charter provide the sole basis for international peace and stability. These must be respected. The United Nations should play a central role in the reconstruction of Iraq.

Following the success of the military action in Iraq, we have heard some highly inflammatory talk of a pre-emptive action in South Asia. Induction of such concepts in a brittle security environment gravely enfeebled by unresolved conflicts and nuclear threats is most irresponsible. South Asia needs statesmanship not sabre-rattling.

For more than half a century, India has been prevaricating on giving the right of self-determination to the people of Jammu and Kashmir to which it had itself committed through the relevant Security Council resolutions. Pakistan is convinced that the Jammu and Kashmir dispute should be resolved peacefully. There is no alternative to negotiations. Equally clear is the fact that viable peace would continue to elude South Asia without a just settlement of this dispute in accordance with the aspirations of the Kashmiri people. No country in the world, however powerful, can subjugate a people for ever.

During the past 18 months, a wall of silence had descended on South Asia, notwithstanding our standing offer for the resumption of serious bilateral negotiations. In fact, in a glaring demonstration of coercive diplomacy, India had deployed nearly a million troops along our borders.

We are now glad to see the stirrings of a positive change in New Delhi. We would like to count on its irreversibility since military brinkmanship is not a viable instrument of policy least of all in a nuclear theatre.

Let me stress here that Pakistan is against terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We have taken a number of effective measures to curb the so-called cross-border infiltration. In order to assuage India's concerns in this respect, we have proposed an international monitoring mechanism along the Line of Control. This is a fair proposal which warrants serious consideration.

We hope that the future round of negotiations, when it materializes, would prove decisive in resolving all bilateral problems. Pakistan approaches the resumption of the dialogue with utmost sincerity and an open mind and expects the same from the other side.

While other regions of the world are reaping the benefits of regional economic integration and globalisation, the overwhelming majority of the people of South Asia seem condemned to a life of grinding poverty. Sub-continental normalization is therefore the central plank of Pakistan's foreign policy. This objective has become more urgent. The two countries, armed with nuclear weaponry and mired in economic backwardness, cannot afford to be at loggerheads for ever.

A wise man once remarked that "Opportunities multiply as they are seized". Pakistan would like this dictum to herald the advent of a new era of peace and partnership in our region. It is also said that "Peace tests a man's character more than the most brutal war." The hopes of the billion and a half people of South Asia are now pinned on the character of their leadership and their commitment to translate the vision of peace into the concreteness of prosperity. Pakistan, on its part, is ready to face this test.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me briefly touch upon our relations with the major powers.

Pakistan's relations with China are time-tested. We are proud of our exemplary friendship. Our relations continue to strengthen in all areas, and this trend is irreversible.

After a hiatus originating in the events of May 1998, our relations with the U.S. have taken a positive turn. We are partners in the international coalition against terrorism, and cooperating effectively. Differences in some areas remains, but those are being addressed in a spirit of cooperation and friendship.

We have excellent relations with the countries of Europe and the European Union as a whole. We are determined to further enlarge the scope of this relationship particularly in the economic and commercial fields. Already the Union is our largest trading partner and we are grateful for the generous access Europe has provided to our textile and other products.

With Russia we are moving in the right direction. President Pervez Musharraf's visit to Moscow last year was a great success. The momentum generated by this visit is being pursued vigorously.

We attach great significance to our ties with Japan and Canada. Our relations with these countries have always been friendly and extensive. These will continue to strengthen across the board.

As an active member of the Islamic fraternity, Pakistan enjoys exemplary ties with its sisterly Muslim states. Strengthening of economic, cultural and political relations with the Islamic world constitutes a central pillar of our diplomacy. We grieve at the mounting loss of life in the occupied Palestinian territory. Violence needs to be urgently replaced by dialogue to facilitate the realization of the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people for a viable and independent state within secure and recognized borders.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before I conclude, I would like to mention that being a moderate, democratic Islamic state, Pakistan is placed in a unique position to promote civilizational and cultural harmony.

We draw considerable satisfaction from the fact that the on-going war against terrorism is not directed against any religion or people. Nonetheless, there is concern among the Islamic nations of the emergence of prejudice and xenophobia. In our view, hate should have no market.

We need to dispense with stereotypes. As our President said, "It is time we began dealing with the "real" Islam and the "real" West rather than caricatures of each."

Let me conclude by saying that between stimulus and response nations have the freedom to choose. Pakistan has made a choice to build a modern, tolerant and a progressive, democratic, Islamic state. Regionally and internationally, we would like to be seen as a factor for peace and stability as well as cultural and religious concord and harmony. The path is strewn with numerous impediments. We must persevere in order to prevail in the interest of the future of our civilization.

I thank you. I will be happy to take questions.